Advancing Mission During the August Recess

Both the House and Senate are on recess and away from Washington, DC, until after Labor Day. Most go back to their states and districts for much of the time. Nonprofit missions won’t be on hiatus in August, however, and public policy needs will continue even while lawmakers are taking a break from hands-on legislating. There’s an opportunity waiting to be seized: **Meet with your elected officials in the coming weeks – while they are home!**

So, **HOW** do you meet with them and **WHAT** should you talk about? We’re so glad you asked.

**The HOW is pretty easy**

Here are some simple, tried-and-true tips for how to engage with federal and state Senators and Representatives during times when they aren’t at the capitols doing what they were elected to do.

- **Schedule a sit down.** Reach out to the elected official’s home office to schedule a meeting. You can bring colleagues and clients from your own organization and/or leaders from other charitable nonprofits to advance a policy perspective.
- **Make it a field trip**: Better yet, invite the official to your facilities to showcase your mission and how you fulfill it. You don’t have to have a brand-new building or beautiful vista. The point is to get the elected folks out into the real world, the world you are working to improve.

*Insider’s Tip*: You are almost certain to get a positive response from the elected official’s staff. The reason is that they need to fill her or his time during the recess. The staffers will admit privately that any time not filled with in-office or site visits leaves more time for the official to come up with not-so-well-thought-out ideas that staff must scramble to dissuade!

- **Put the officials to work**. People who face voters need opportunities to interact with the public, so leverage their wants with your needs. As in, provide the elected officials with volunteer opportunities. Have a chili cookoff fundraiser this month? Need ushers and volunteers to work the Shakespeare in the Park performance? You see where we’re going? If you can connect volunteerism, a crowd, and a photo-op, you have the makings of a great, August Recess engagement.

- **“Gamify” the August Recess experience**. We know national organizations that incentivize their local operations to compete for prizes like **Best Photo Contest** and **Largest Attendance** at an event with an elected official. Never underestimate the power of competition among friends as a motivating factor.

**The WHAT is pretty clear too**

If you’ve never met with your Senator or Representative, the meeting topic can be as simple as introducing your organization, telling who and how you serve, sharing stories of impact, and basically explaining why you do what you do. A seasoned lobbyist taught us a valuable advocacy lesson worth sharing here: “You never want to have to ask a stranger for a favor ... so get on out there and make a friend.” Recess meetings are perfect times for this kind of relationship building.

Also, this August 2023, nonprofits are facing workforce shortages, decreased charitable giving, low volunteerism, and increased demands for services with direct impact on the communities they serve. Thanks to advocacy efforts involving direct lobbying, grassroots action, and coordinated communications, there are bipartisan bills pending in Congress designed to overcome these challenges and more. Senators and Representatives need to hear from nonprofit staff and board members
about the urgent needs in communities and how proposed legislative solutions need their attention as soon as they get back to Washington in September.

Hot Topics 2023

- *Streamlining Federal Grants Act of 2023* (S.2286) - Why it matters
- *Charitable Act* (S.566 / H.R.3435) - Why it matters
- *Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act* (H.R.3032) – Why it matters

Here’s a reminder. It’s their job to meet you, listen to you, and take action in support of the public good. If they don’t hear from you, they won’t learn of your mission, passion, and impact. But they will hear about someone else’s.

Good luck. Your mission is counting on you!